DOE/EA-0835

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Construction of the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory Conference Center

July 1993

U.S. Department of Energy Savannah River Operations Office

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

1.0 Summary

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, requires Federal agencies to assess the environmental consequences associated with their actions (USC 4321-4347). It is the policy of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to follow the letter and spirit of NEPA; to comply fully with the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508); and to apply the NEPA review process early in the planning stages for DOE proposed actions. The revised DOE NEPA Implementing Procedures (10 CFR 1021) became effective on May 26, 1992.

This Environmental Assessment (EA) reviews the environmental consequences associated with the proposed action of granting a site use permit to construct and operate a conference center on an approximately 70-acre tract of land on the Savannah River Site (SRS). While the proposed action requires an administrative decision by DOE, this EA reviews the linked action of physically constructing and operating a conference center.

The SRS is a DOE-owned nuclear production facility encompassing approximately 200,000 acres in southwestern South Carolina. The Site borders the Savannah River and is near Augusta, Georgia, and Aiken and Barnwell, South Carolina (Figure 1). SRS facilities include five nuclear production reactors (three in standby status, one in extended shutdown, and one undergoing startup testing), two chemical separations areas, a fuel and target fabrication facility, a defense waste processing facility, a saltstone waste facility, and various supporting facilities.

The proposed conference center would have an area of approximately 4,000 square feet, and would infrequently accommodate as many as 150 people, with the average being about 20 people per day. The University of Georgia Research Foundation, Inc., would provide the funding for the construction of the facility. The Savannah River Ecology Laboratory (SREL), which the Research Foundation operates under contract to DOE, would operate, manage, and maintain the center as part of its applied research mission. The Research Foundation would own the facility. If the contract were discontinued, title to the conference center would pass to DOE.

In addition to the *No-Action* alternative, under which the Research Foundation would not require the 70-acre tract of SRS land for a conference center, this EA considers site preservation. Under *Site Preservation* only minimal activities necessary to the SRS mission would occur, thereby establishing the lower limits of environmental consequences. A review conducted under the SRS permitting process identified no other forms of possible site development. Similarly, SRS areas identified in the *Nuclear Complex Reconfiguration Site Proposal* (DOE, 1991a) do not include the conference center site area in proposed weapons complex reconfiguration activities. As a consequence, this EA does not consider other forms of possible site development as alternatives.

The potential environmental consequences associated with the action of constructing and operating a conference center include impacts to cultural resources and impacts from construction activities, primarily related to land clearing (5 to 10 acres) and providing access to the site. Table 1 summarizes potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed action and its alternatives. Mitigation activities would reduce or eliminate these potential impacts.

2.0 Purpose and Need for Action

The SREL mission is to conduct basic and applied research on the SRS. The purpose of this research is to develop an understanding of the impacts of various energy technologies and natural resource management practices on the ecosystems of the southeastern United States. In addition, SREL communicates this knowledge to the public and the scientific community.

Table 1. Potential Environmental Impacts

	No Action	Proposed Action	Site Preservation
Water Resources			
Surface	1	1	0
Groundwater	0	1	0
Wetlands and Floodplains	1	1	0
Terrestrial Resources	1	2	0
Air and Noise			
Air	1	1	0
Noise	1	1	0
Threatened and Endangered Species	0	0	0
Cultural Resources[a]	1	3	0
Socioeconomics and Transportation			
Socioeconomics	1	2	0
Transportation	0	1	0
Hazardous Impacts	1	1	0
Cumulative Impacts	0	1	0

a. Impacts will be mitigated by avoidance of significant cultural resource sites.

KEY: 4 - Significant
3 - Moderate
2 - Small
1 - Negligible
0 - None

The construction of the proposed conference center would further those purposes by enhancing SREL educational outreach programs and by providing a facility in which small groups of scientists could hold workshops in areas related to DOE programs. In addition, the facility could host foreign visitors who might experience difficulty in obtaining access to the secure areas of the SRS. Finally, making the facility available to other SRS groups and to the public would further SREL purposes (Smith and Gibbons, 1990).

The existing SREL facility on the SRS (Building 737-A) does not lend itself to these enhanced program goals, and there is not sufficient space for such activities. The existing SREL facility would continue its current operations, using the proposed conference center as an adjunct facility.

3.0 Proposed Action and Alternatives

3.1 Proposed Action

The proposed action is for DOE to grant a site use permit to construct and operate an SREL Conference Center on the SRS. While the proposed action requires an administrative decision by DOE, the physical construction of the conference center is a linked action having potential environmental consequences.

The proposed location for the conference center (Figure 2) is an approximately 70-acre tract of land north of U.S. Highway 278 on the northern periphery of the SRS, near the west bank of Upper Three Runs Creek at its confluence with Boggy Gut Branch. If DOE grants a permit, the U.S. Forest Service's Savannah River Forest Station (SRFS) would remove the site area from its commercial timber management program, under which it presently manages the site. Deer hunts presently occur in the general vicinity. If the area were opened to deer hunts in the future, no deer stands would be permitted within gun range of the conference center.

The proposed conference center would be a one-story building of approximately 4,000 square feet that would infrequently accommodate as many as 150 people, with the average being about 20 people per day. The center would include a large assembly room, office space, and a kitchen. The proposed action also includes the construction of parking spaces and road access. The conference center would require utilities such as telephone, electricity (400-amp panel), a septic system, and a potable well with a flow of 25 gallons per minute. Additional uses of the site area would include nature trails, gardens, and research demonstration areas (small-scale communities of naturally associating plant species). Access to the site would be along an existing roadbed. Nature trails, gardens, and research demonstration areas would take advantage of the existing landscape.

The University of Georgia Research Foundation, Inc., would provide the funding for the construction of the facility. The SREL, which the Research Foundation operates under contract to DOE, would operate, manage, and maintain the center as part of its applied research mission and as an adjunct to the existing SREL facility at Building 737-A. The Research Foundation would own the facility. If the contract were discontinued, title to the conference center would pass to DOE.

3.2 Alternatives

3.2.1 Site Preservation

This alternative would preserve the proposed site in a natural state with minimal activities occurring. Access would be limited to activities necessary to support the SRS mission indirectly, such as fire suppression, red-cockaded woodpecker (*Piciodes borealis*) management, and appropriate security actions. Ongoing timber management activities would cease, thereby establishing the lower limits of environmental consequences. Under this alternative, the existing SREL facility would continue its current operations at Building 737-A.

3.2.2 No Action

Under the *No-Action* alternative the University of Georgia Research Foundation, Inc., would not require a permit to construct and operate an SREL Conference Center on the proposed site area. Ongoing actions would continue as described in the SRS *Natural Resources Management Plan* (DOE, 1991b), SRFS operational management plans currently under development, and other DOE-mandated activities. At present the tract is part of several timber management compartments and is close to red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) management areas. Under this alternative, the existing SREL facility would continue its current operations at Building 737-A.

4.0 Facility Description and Preferred Site

4.1 Facility Description

The proposed conference center would be a rustic one-story wooden-framed structure of approximately 4,000 square feet with a footprint of about 95 feet by 43 feet (Figure 3). The facility would contain a large assembly room with a stone fireplace, an office, a kitchen, and two restrooms. A conventional heat pump would provide heating and cooling. Other facility support items include 400-amp electrical service, telephone service, a septic system, and a potable well yielding approximately 25 gallons per minute. The site area would have nature trails, gardens, and research demonstration areas. Approximately $300,000 is available to construct the center and develop the site.

The facility would accommodate as many as 150 people on an infrequent basis. The expected daily usage would average 20 people. The conference center would not have a full-time staff.

An existing roadbed would provide access to the building site. Access roads and parking spaces would be improved and covered with crushed rock. An existing easement would provide access for electrical and telephone service. A planned unmanned security gate would control access to the site.

4.2 Preferred Site and Alternative Candidate Sites

The basis for the proposed conference center site selection process was the need for the conference center to be relatively accessible to population centers where visitors would reside while in the area, to be convenient to the SREL main building, and to minimize security considerations. The preferred site has the desired characteristics and, due to its location near public lands and away from onsite development, is less likely to be needed for competing uses than other areas of the SRS that have similar characteristics. A screening for candidate sites identified four potential sites with some combination of the following characteristics:

- Minimum of 20 to 50 acres
- Location outside secure areas
- Road access available
- Utilities or existing easements available
- Diversity of natural surroundings
- Suitable for pond construction
- Proximity to SREL main building
- Visually appealing
- Water supply potential
- SREL research sites within 5 miles

Figure 4 shows the preferred site and the alternative candidate sites. Candidate site 1 is near the Aiken barricade close to SRS Road 1 and S.C. Route 19. Candidate site 2 is near the existing SREL facility and near the intersection of SRS Roads 1 and 1A. Candidate site 3 is on S.C. Route 125, near the town of Jackson, South Carolina. While each of the candidate sites exhibited some of the desired characteristics, they were rejected because of less diverse habitat, proximity to more developed areas of the site, and potential logistic problems with heavy site traffic and noise at various times during the day.

The preferred site (Smith, 1991) for the proposed conference center lies on a ridge north of U.S. Highway 278, west of the Upper Three Runs Creek floodplain, and approximately 0.9 mile south of the SRS northern boundary and 14.1 miles from the 3/700-Area. The site fronts Phelps Road (781.3) for 400 feet and expands easterly on Road 219 to the Upper Three Runs Creek Set-Aside boundary (Figure 5). The Set-Aside is an identified area reserved for ecological research in which SRFS does not conduct timber management activities. It includes the Upper Three Runs Creek stream corridor plus a buffer zone approximately running along the highest topography on both sides of the stream from U.S. Highway 278 to the SRS boundary. The approximately 70-acre site has an existing easement to the SRS boundary and is adjacent to Phelps Pond, a 2-acre farm pond with an unbreached dam. Due to the proximity of Phelps Pond, a new pond would not be constructed.

The site is in timber compartment 23 and portions of stands 4, 6, and 7. Stand 4 is a 37-year-old slash pine (*Pinus elliottii*) plantation; stand 6 is an 8-year-old loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*) plantation; and stand 7 is a 28-year-old longleaf pine (*Pinus polustris*) plantation. The stand 7 area offers the most suitable building site due to its topography, upland vegetation, and proximity to Phelps Pond and the Set-Aside. Figure 5 shows the planned location of the conference center on the site.

The site soils are predominantly of the Blanton-Lakeland association, with small areas in the Troup and Vaucluse series. These soils are well drained to excessively well-drained and are associated with a 0- to 10-percent slope. Building site soils would have slight to moderate limitations for septic tank use (USDA, 1990).

5.0 Affected Environment

The *Final Environmental Impact Statement, Continued Operation of K-, L-, and P- Reactors* (DOE, 1990) presents a comprehensive discussion of the SRS and the associated environs. The environmental consequences associated with the proposed action would primarily affect the microenvironment described in Section 4.2 of this EA. Section 6.0 discusses the affected regional environment where applicable.

6.0 Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action and Alternatives

6.1 Water Resources

Surface Water. Surface waters adjacent to the preferred site include Upper Three Runs Creek and Boggy Gut Branch. The preferred site is also adjacent to a 2-acre farm pond with an unbreached dam that is hydrologically connected to Upper Three Runs Creek by an unnamed creek. Even during construction, storm water runoff due to the proposed action would not significantly increase. The access road and parking areas would be covered with crushed stone. The conference center building would be the only impermeable surface added at the site. During construction, the implementation of control measures would prevent erosion around the building site and control sedimentation and runoff to the adjacent surface waters.

The *Site Preservation* and *No-Action* alternatives would not produce measurable effects on the adjacent surface waters, although planned timber management would continue under the *No-Action* alternative.

Groundwater. The proposed action would require a potable water supply and septic system. The drinking water well would require a flow of approximately 25 gallons per minute. This would have insignificant effects on the existing water table. No other uses of groundwater would occur in the general site area. The installation of the septic tank and the drainfield would adhere to local standards, South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) regulations, and DOE General Design Criteria, as appropriate.

The *Site Preservation* and *No-Action* alternatives would not produce measurable effects on groundwater resources.

6.2 Wetlands and Floodplains

In accordance with 10 CFR 1022, *Compliance with Floodplain/Wetlands Environmental Review Requirements*, DOE has reviewed the proposed action to determine the applicability of the floodplain management and wetlands protection requirements. DOE used Flood Insurance Rate Maps to determine if the proposed action would be in the base or critical floodplain. DOE also used U.S. Geological Survey Topographic maps, the *Soil Survey Savannah River Plant Area, Parts of Aiken, Barnwell, and Allendale Counties, South Carolina* (USDA, 1990), and a field survey to determine if wetlands are present on the conference center site.

Wetlands occur in the vicinity of Phelps Pond and Upper Three Runs Creek adjacent to the site area. However, there are no floodplains or wetlands on the proposed conference center site. All construction would occur on uplands above the adjacent wetlands. Storm water runoff and erosion controls would prevent impacts to the adjacent wetland areas. The elevation of the proposed site is more than 40 feet above the 100-year floodplain.

Phelps Pond and the Set-Aside area are considered visual resources and are not an integral part of planned research demonstration activities. No measurable effects would result from limited visits to the area.

The *Site Preservation* and *No-Action* alternatives would not produce measurable effects.

6.3 Terrestrial Resources

Pine plantations characterize the site. Species include loblolly, longleaf, and slash. The access road is bounded by 8- to 10-year-old loblolly pine. The remainder of the site area is covered by more mature (28- to 37-year-old) slash and longleaf pine. The building site is in a longleaf, mixed hardwood stand.

The proposed action would produce nominal terrestrial impacts. Access would be along an existing roadbed, which would be graded. The installation of drainage devices and the spreading of crushed rock would improve the road, but it would not be paved. Clearing the site for construction and parking areas would occur with minimal loss of mature trees. Site conditions would allow construction activities to occur without requiring large areas to be cleared (5 to 10 acres including the existing roadbed). SREL would develop nature trails, gardens, and research demonstration areas (small-scale communities of naturally associating plant species) to take advantage of the existing landscape. The construction activities would not affect the Set-Aside area or Phelps Pond.

The 70-acre site area occupies less than 1 percent of the acreage under commercial forest management and, therefore, would represent only a nominal reduction in timber yields. Annual deer hunts in the vicinity would continue but stand locations for hunters would be out of gun range (900 feet or more) from the conference center, the access road, or other areas where people could be using the site.

The installation of the well, septic tank, and drain field for sanitary waste treatment would be within the area cleared for the building and parking spaces. The conference center would require no additional cleared areas.

An existing utility easement would provide utilities to the site area. Limited clearing along the easement corridor would be necessary to gain access and install utility poles. The total distance traversed inside the SRS boundary would be less than 1 mile.

The *No-Action* and *Site Preservation* alternatives would produce little impact, although planned timber management would continue under the *No-Action* alternative, resulting in altered habitat creating conditions for the dominance of early natural succession species.

6.4 Air and Noise

The *Air Quality, Cooling Tower, and Noise Impact Analyses* (NUS, 1991) and *Sound-Level Characterization of the Savannah River Site* (NUS, 1990) document SRS baseline air quality and noise conditions.

The nearest residence to the proposed conference center site is approximately 1.5 miles away; the nearest permanent onsite work unit is approximately 4.5 miles from the conference center site. Both of these receptors are sufficiently removed from the site area to avoid the nominal transient air quality impacts that would result from the use of construction equipment and the generation of fugitive dust. The operation of the conference center would produce nominal effects associated with vehicle traffic and burning in the wood fireplace. A conventional heat pump would provide heating and air conditioning; no fossil fuels or diesel generators would be used at the site.

Noise impacts from the use of tools and machinery during the construction phase would be transient and temporary. Nominal noise from the use of the conference center would be primarily from vehicles driving to and from the site. Site-generated noise would not affect the two receptors identified above. The projected level of conference center use would produce temporary nominal noise impacts on wildlife.

The *No-Action* and *Site Preservation* alternatives would not produce any construction-related air quality and noise impacts. There would be temporary effects related to timbering operations under the *No-Action* alternative associated with noise and emission from timber management tools and equipment.

6.5 Threatened and Endangered Species

Threatened, Endangered, and Candidate Plant and Animal Species of the Savannah River Site (HNUS, 1992a) describes floral and faunal threatened and endangered (T&E) species known to occur or that might occur on the SRS. These include 1 species of mammal, 5 species of birds, 5 species of amphibians, 5 species of reptiles, 1 species of fish, 2 species of invertebrates, and 19 species of plants.

The only endangered specie known to occur in close proximity to the proposed conference center site and potentially sensitive to the proposed action is the red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW). The site is approximately 1 mile from the nearest RCW foraging area to the southeast; approximately 1.5 miles from the nearest inactive colony to the southeast; and approximately 3.5 miles from the nearest active colony to the east-southeast.

On February 1, 1993, DOE initiated formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and submitted a biological evaluation (Roecker, 1992) in accordance with Section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act. The evaluation concluded that "...through a review of the literature, consultation with species experts and field reviews, it is determined that the proposed construction will not adversely affect a threatened, endangered or sensitive species on the SRS." On March 4, 1993, DOE received a letter from the FWS concurring with the determination (EuDaly, 1993) (Appendix A).

SREL would acquire any plant species of special concern for the research gardens or demonstration areas from a licensed commercial nursery or horticulturist, or in consultation with the FWS.

The *Site Preservation* and *No-Action* alternatives would have no effect on T&E species.

6.6 Cultural Resources

A Programmatic Memorandum of Agreement (PMOA, 1990) between the DOE Savannah River Field Office (DOE-SR), the South Carolina State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation ratified on August 24, 1990, is the instrument for the management of cultural resources at SRS. DOE-SR uses this PMOA to identify cultural resources, assess them in terms of eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places, and develop mitigation plans for affected resources in consultation with the SHPO. DOE-SR would comply with the stipulations of the PMOA for all activities related to the proposed SREL conference center project.

The proposed conference center site is in Archaeological Sensitivity Zone I. This zone has the highest probability of containing significant archaeological sites. The area has five suspected archaeological sites in and around the proposed access road (Brooks and Brooks, 1991).

In late 1992 and early 1993, an extensive archaeological survey of the proposed conference center site was conducted. Three sites were located, two of which are judged to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. One of the eligible sites is remote from areas to be distrubed by construction and operation of the conference center. The other is extensive, and portions of it probably underlie the conference center construction site shown in Figure 5. Because of sedimentation, artifacts associated with the archaeological site are greater than 60 cm below the surface at this location, and would not be disturbed by construction and operation. In fact, the construction site shown in Figure 5 is upslope from the original proposed location, specifically to mitigate potential impacts on archaeological resources by avoidance. The SHPO was informally consulted during the archaeological survey process. DOE submitted the archaeological survey report (Stephenson et al., 1993) to the SHPO on March 1, 1993. The report recommends mitigation by avoidance of potential adverse effects on National Register eligible sites.

Potential effects associated with the *No-Action* and *Site Preservation* alternatives would be nominal. However, there could be some increased risk under the *Site Preservation* alternative from illegal excavation due to the remoteness of the site and the absence of frequent visitors to the site area.

6.7 Socioeconomics and Transportation

Socioeconomics. The following base socioeconomic information is from the *Socioeconomic Characteristics of Selected Counties and Communities Adjacent to the Savannah River Site* (HNUS, 1992b). The region of influence is that area in which socioeconomic impacts could reasonably be expected to occur. In the case of the SRS, the region of influence has been identified as a six-county area in Georgia and South Carolina (Figure 6). More than 85 percent of the approximately 22,000 SRS workers reside in one of the six counties in the region of influence. In 1990 and 1991, the SREL workforce was 181, less than 1 percent of the total workforce. Seventy-five percent of the SREL employees reside in Aiken County, South Carolina, which is a larger percentage than that for the SRS workforce as a whole (52 percent).

The construction and operation of the proposed conference center would not add new permanent jobs to the SREL staff. The only socioeconomic impact for the project would be associated with construction activities and visitors to the conference center from outside the local area.

Construction activities would be contracted locally. Peak employment would be approximately 12 individuals in the building trades for a period of about 6 months. Estimated available funds are $300,000, with no indirect and induced multipliers. No importation of specialized skills would occur. The local socioeconomic impact would be the same as that for the construction of a large residence or small commercial facility. There would be nominal additional work for providing electrical and telephone service to the building site. In 1989 about 223 firms worked in the building trades in Aiken County, with a total payroll of more than $30 million. The proposed $300,000 conference center, or about 1 percent of 1989 payroll, would have a minimal impact on the local economy.

SREL anticipates approximately 1,000 annual visitors from outside the region of influence, 500 of whom would use the conference center (Gregory, 1992). Based on a 1987-1988 survey, visitors to Aiken County spend about $75 per day (SCDPRT, 1990). Because visitation to the Central Savannah River Area is a multimillion-dollar industry, there would be negligible impacts from conference center operation. Similarly, there would be little impact on the availability of hotel rooms.

The removal of the conference center site area from the active timber management program would not measurably affect employment in the timber industry or reduce revenues from timber sales.

The *Site Preservation* and *No-Action* alternatives would not produce measurable effects on the socioeconomics of the region.

Transportation. U.S. Highway 278 crosses the northeast corner of the SRS. Phelps Road intersects Highway 278, providing access to Road 219 and the proposed conference center site. Travel between the conference center and the SREL main building would be on SRS Road 1 by way of S.C. Route 19 to U.S. 278 (Figure 7).

A 1989 traffic analysis characterized the traffic flow on the SRS (HNUS, 1992b). Highway 278 has an estimated annual average daily traffic flow (AADT) of 2,000 to 5,000 vehicles per day. Peak-hour traffic flow is fewer than 500 vehicles per hour. The traffic flow is stable for both peak and nonpeak conditions. SRS Road 1 from S.C. 19 has an AADT of fewer than 2,000 vehicles per day, with peak-hour traffic less than 500 vehicles per hour. Flow is stable (upper speed limit). Given the estimates of average daily use of the conference center, additional affects on AADT would be nominal.

The *Site Preservation* and *No-Action* alternatives would not produce measurable effects on transportation patterns on the SRS.

6.8 Hazardous Materials

Vehicle movements during construction could generate small oil or fuel spills that would undergo proper cleanup and disposal. The possible use of herbicides in the utility easement would retard vegetation. No regular use of hazardous materials (fuels, gases, chemicals) would occur, with the possible exception of pesticides and herbicides.

Transformers needed for electrical service would not contain polychlorinated biphenyls. Transformers and large capacitors would use replacement electrolytic fluids such as silicon hexafluoride.

The *No-Action* alternative could produce minor oil or gas spills from timber management tools and equipment. The *Site Preservation* alternative would provide minimal opportunity for hazardous material use in the site area.

6.9 Health and Safety

Potential occupational health and safety impacts associated with conference center construction would be consistent with those commonly found in the residential construction industry. Operation of the conference center would have negligible health and safety impacts.

The *No-Action* alternative could have potential impacts from the operation of timber management tools and equipment. There would be no measurable impact associated with the *Site Preservation* alternative.

Radiological impacts resulting from exposures to conference center site construction workers and visitors (scientists, school groups, local community groups) would be negligible. The *Savannah River Site Environmental Report for 1991* (Arnett et al., 1992) provides information on exposure limits. There would be no variation between alternatives.

6.10 Cumulative Impacts

The final EIS on the continued operation of SRS reactors (DOE, 1990) analyzed cumulative impacts associated with new and planned facilities at the SRS. The proposed action would produce nominal cumulative socioeconomic impacts and reductions in commercial timber harvesting. The *No-Action* and *Site Preservation* alternatives would have no measurable cumulative impacts.

7.0 Permitting

Community/Noncommunity Water Supply Systems, Potable Water Well. SCDHEC requires a permit (Regulation R.61-58.1 to 10) to construct noncommunity water-supply systems, including potable water wells. Noncommunity systems include schools, institutions, industries, recreation areas, motels, and hotels. The regulations describe in detail the physical, engineering, and geologic criteria and requirements for the construction and operation of a potable well. The Water Supply Division of SCDHEC must issue the permit before well installation can occur.

Individual Sewage Treatment and Disposal Systems, Including Septic Tanks. SCHDEC Regulations (R.61-56 and R.61-56.1) require certification of the issuance of a permit to install and operate a septic tank and drain field. In Aiken County, the Aiken County Environmental/Sanitation Office, as the official health authority, receives the applications and issues the permits. Regulations R.61-56 and R.61-56.1 contain the specifications, criteria, and requirements for locating, sizing, and constructing approved septic systems.

Storm Water Management and Sediment Reduction Act. South Carolina Land Resources Conservation Commission regulations (Title 48, Chapter 14, 72-300 to 72-316) became effective at the SRS on June 26, 1992. The regulations require the submittal of a storm water management and sediment control plan for review and approval before any construction activities on the SRS occur. The plan should describe the control measures that the project will implement during and after construction to prevent erosion and manage storm water. Section 72-307 of the regulations contain plan specifications and criteria.

8.0 Mitigation Actions

DOE would ensure that this project takes appropriate mitigation actions in the following areas:

- **Water Resources.** Take storm water control and sediment reduction actions during both construction and operation of the conference center; develop and implement a storm water management and sediment control plan.

- **Threatened and Endangered Species.** Take appropriate action under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act in circumstances described by the FWS (EuDaly, 1993.)

- **Cultural Resources.** Based on the results of cultural resource surveys in the site area, mitigate by avoidance of any potential impacts to significant resources identified.

9.0 List of Organizations Consulted

The following list of organizations were consulted to obtain information used in the preparation of this Environmental Assessment.

- Non-Game Heritage Trust Program, State of South Carolina (provided information on the appropriate handling of sensitive plant species)

- Savannah River Forest Station, United States Forest Service (provided information on timber management and hunting activities and conducted the biological evaluation of the site area)

- Savannah River Archaeological Research Program (screened the site area for potential cultural resources; field investigations are complete)

- United States Fish and Wildlife Service (consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act)

- South Carolina State Historic Preservation Officer (consultation under the Programmatic Memorandum of Agreement between DOE-SR, the SHPO, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation)

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APPENDIX A

THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES CONSULTATION

-176958

United States Department of the Interior
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
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TAKE PRIDE IN AMERICA

March 4, 1993

MAR 09 RECD

Mr. S. R. Wright, Director
Environmental and Laboratory Programs Branch
Department of Energy
Field Office, Savannah River
P.O. Box A
Aiken, SC 29802

Re: Proposed Savannah River Ecology Laboratory
Conference Center
FWS Log No. 4-6-93-207

Dear Mr. Wright:

We have reviewed the Biological Evaluation received February 4, 1993 concerning the above-referenced project at Savannah River Site in Aiken County, South Carolina. Based on this information, we will concur with a determination that this action is not likely to adversely affect federally listed or proposed endangered and threatened species including the red-cockaded woodpecker(Picoides borealis). In view of this, we believe that the requirements of Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act have been satisfied. However, obligations under Section 7 of the Act must be reconsidered if (1) new information reveals impacts of this identified action that may affect listed species or critical habitat in a manner not previously considered, (2) this action is subsequently modified in a manner which was not considered in this assessment, or (3) a new species is listed or critical habitat is determined that may be affected by the identified action.

Please note that this letter covers only the 70 acre site described in the Biological Evaluation as encompassing three forested stands, a 37 year old slash pine plantation, an 8 year old loblolly pine plantation, and a 28 year old longleaf pine stand. Specifically, this letter does not cover the extensive wetlands and mesic upland hardwood areas that occur in close proximity to the proposed conference center. If these areas are to be impacted now or in the future, you must reinitiate consultation with this office.

Your interest in ensuring the protection of endangered and threatened species and our nation's valuable wetland resources is appreciated. If you have any questions please contact Ms. Lori Duncan of my staff at (803) 727-4707.

Sincerely yours,

Edwin M. EuDaly

Edwin M. EuDaly
Acting Field Supervisor

EME/LWD/km